CAN CHURCH EDUCATION BE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

BY EDWARD FARLEY

The "gulf between theological education as ordered learning and 'education' in the church is not a surface or trivial phenomenon, but part of the deep structures of the church's self-understanding. It involves, therefore, fundamental assumptions about faith, theology, learning, and education."

HOW IS IT that the Christian faith, committed as it is to relate faith to reality, world, knowledge, and learning, continues to restrict this relating to its ordained leadership and to withhold it from the laity? Why is it that education in the congregation and for the believer at large is so conceived that it has little to do with the disciplines and rigors of ordered learning? Why is it that *theological* education, ongoing studies in disciplines and skills necessary for the understanding and interpretation of Scripture, doctrines, moral principles and policies, and areas of praxis, defines something needed by Christian clergy but never by Christian laity? In the face of the modern democratization of education and learning, how is it that the church continues to settle for the pre-modern pattern of educated clergy and uneducated laity and for the almost uncrossable gulf between theological (clergy) education and church education? The persistence of this pattern is an anomaly in a religious tradition which repudiates obscurantist modes of faith and prizes learning. This essay will explore both sides of this anomaly; that which impells Christian faith to take education (ordered learning) seriously, and the subterranean moves in the church's history which produced the restriction of ordered learning to clergy education.[1]

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[1]The essential ambiguity of the word "education" is discussed later in the essay. Because of this ambiguity, I shall use the expression "ordered learning" as a designation of education.

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I
FAITH, WISDOM, AND ORDERED LEARNING

Why is "ordered learning" (education) an important undertaking in the Christian church? If we take this to be a *historical* question, we ask how does something born in the migrations of an ancient, nomadic, and tribal people, and at the bloody scene of a crucified Jew and the fiery tongues of Pentecost end up with classrooms, degrees, libraries, universities, Sunday schools, and teaching elders? History provides a rather obvious answer, but we should not be too quick to embrace it. History says that education comes from the Greek side of our civilization's ancestry. Once the Christian movement became a permanent occupant of the ancient world and not just a temporary house guest, it took this Greek idea into itself. We can add to this historical explanation the sociological insight that any movement which is to survive over time must discover means of transmitting itself to future generations. Thus, we find teachers listed by Paul as embodying one of the gifts (charismata) which ordered the life of the church.

However, we need to resist explaining the presence of ordered learning in early Christianity by simply citing the hellenistic side of our heritage. Something like education had been going on in Israel and Judaism long before the Christian movement. The Septuagint used the Greek word *paideia* to translate the Hebrew word which meant to nurture, discipline, chasten. This discipline and nurture occurring in the Jewish family was the background for the Psalmist's description of God chastening or disciplining the people. When Judaism arose, developing a new institution of social survival and religious life in the diaspora, ordered learning as the study of Torah occurred with special teachers (rabbis) in a special place (the synagogue). The early Christian movement did not repudiate this tradition. It modeled its own congregations on the synagogue, proposed teachers for those congregations, and in one Gospel applied the term "rabbi" to Jesus himself. We conclude that the self-conscious transmission of the tradition by teachers is a deeper and older part of the Christian heritage than simply its roots in hellenistic culture.

1. *Faith and Reality.* These observations of the continuity of early Christianity with its Jewish background account for the presence of ordered learning in Christianity only by means of historical influence and sociological utility. But education as a mere social necessity can be prompted by a movement's desire to perpetuate itself, and self-perpetuation can have the character of mere propaganda and ideology. We are, therefore, prompted to press our question in a different way. Is there something about the very nature of faith as an existence in the world before God which founds in the community of faith an inclination and seriousness about ordered learning? Two issues call for exploration at this point: faith and *reality* (truth), and faith and *theology*.

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We are familiar with criticisms of religion as such and of Christian faith which argue that faith turns the human being away from reality. Faith, thus, is an opiate, a soporific. And there is plenty of documentation throughout the history of Christianity to support such an argument. Yet one of the recurring notions in the writings of Israel is the warning against deceit. "Deceit" and "deceive" do not name simply occasional and specific acts of trickery or telling lies, although these things are not excluded. These words describe, rather, a posture of the heart, something virtually synonymous with sin itself. In deceit, human beings are not just telling lies, but are themselves a kind of lie, a living deception. Another term found frequently in both Israel's writings and early Christian literature is the word "truth." Like the word deceit, truth does not name something trivial or occasional, whose opposite is an error or mistake. Truth too is a posture of the heart. It is something which comes from God who corrects deceit and redeems the heart. "Send out thy light and thy truth. Let them lead us." And in Paul truth is both something that evil suppresses and that poses the issue of what is properly worshipped. A third term is "wisdom," the central theme of Proverbs. Wisdom too is a matter of the heart, the very center and depth of the human being. "Teach me wisdom in my secret heart," says the Psalmist. Wisdom is constituted by awe, fear, knowledge of the Lord. Its opposite is not simply cleverness or the retention of information.

This language of deceit, truth, and wisdom attests to something very central in faith as a mode of existence before God. The fundamental brokenness and alienation of the human being is a darkened posture of the heart and mind which orients the human being toward everything in the mode of deception and self-deception. Born from this darkened posture are trickery, lying, dishonesty, intellectual dishonesty, reality denial. Since these things attest the absence of the presence and grace of God, truth and wisdom are matters of redemption. With redemption comes a new posture of the heart, a wisdom founded in God, directed toward everything . . . to the other human being, nature, the self, the world in its perils and in its beauty. This is why faith has the opposite dynamics from an opiate. The corruption of the human being turns it away from reality, impells it to exploitative, oppressive, destructive relations with nature and other persons. All these acts are reality-indifferent and reality-destructive. If redemption liberates from these things, its effect is an opening up to reality, a seriousness about what is and what occurs, an interest in the autonomy, integrity, and even beauty of the world.

The second issue is the relation of faith and *theology*. Because of the unfortunate history and present connotations of the word theology, we are tempted to discuss this issue in other terms. However, the argument of this essay is that the ordered learning (education) occurring in congregations should be theological education. Hence, faith's relation to theology is a central issue. What history has done to the word, theology, is reduce its meaning to its objective referent (a system of doctrines,

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beliefs), and then narrow its locus to the specific school and scholarly enterprise which deals with doctrines. Given this objectification and professionalization of the term, theology becomes the possession of schools and of a group of scholar-teachers in schools. These narrowings are now so stamped on the church and even the schools that the rescue of the word is highly unlikely. We can, however, attempt to recover the older meaning of theology for the purpose of understanding why ordered learning may be a concern intrinsic to faith itself. In this older sense, theology was not just the scholar's possession, the teacher's trade, but the wisdom proper to the life of the believer. This presupposed that faith (as a mode of existence before God) was not simply an emotion or feeling but included a kind of knowledge. Faith was a practical knowledge having the character of wisdom because it had to do with the believer's ways of existing in the world before God.

Because faith is a response to grace and redemption, thus grounded in the event and person of Jesus of Nazareth, the wisdom of faith has a certain natural structure. First, it has a ground or basis, something which evokes it, makes it possible. And this something is not simply grace in general, but grace as it has disposed history and a community. This is why one of the directions theology (wisdom) faces is toward its past heritage or tradition: the events, imagery, history through which grace is experienced. The believer's wisdom is, then, a perpetual appropriation and interpretation of this heritage. Second, wisdom is concerned with tradition neither simply in an antiquarian way nor in the idolatrous sense of absolutizing tradition, but through its orientation toward truth and reality. Hence, faith's interpretation of the vast and complex Christian heritage or tradition is always critical, assessive, appropriative. It is never merely passive or reality-indifferent interpretation. Third, the believer's wisdom always occurs in the actual, contemporary setting of the believer's existence. Existing in that setting freely, responsibly, joyously, constitutes the situation of the believer. Hence, a third dimension of wisdom or theology is the interpretation of that setting in its various dimensions. This, too, is why faith's wisdom is not simply directed to the past. Tradition, truth, and contemporaneity mark the ever-present aspects of theology or the believer's wisdom. Theology in this sense is a mark and task of faith as an existence in the world before God.

2. *Faith and Ordered Learning.* What do faith's orientation to reality (truth) and to theology (wisdom) have to do with ordered learning or education? Two extreme versions of faith's relation to learning need to be avoided. The one identifies faith with knowledge (gnosis); the other expels knowledge from faith altogether. A corrupted form of the Catholic version of the latter sees existence before God as a perpetual process of penance addressed to moral consciousness and action and assisted by the church's sacraments. A corrupted form of the Protestant version sees existence before God as a religio-moral piety taken more or

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less directly from the texts of Scripture interpreted in preaching. Insofar as both versions do expel knowledge and learning from faith, they presuppose that faith's wisdom can be formed in relation to the imagery and events of tradition, the issue of truth, and the press of the situation apart from the faithful person's own struggles, disciplines, and insights. Thinking and insight are thus assigned to an elite leadership whose interpretations and cognitions occur above and on behalf of the believer. Insofar as the believer has insight or understanding, it is unrelated to knowledge and the sort of knowledge ordered learning addresses.

It goes without saying that anyone who participates in a living community is constantly formed by its inherited imagery and shaped by its normative events. We would not then dispute the valid point that the believer's wisdom is formed in deep social processes which are "means of grace"; thus, proclamation, sacraments, intersubjective intentions and acts, liturgy, and the structures of ecclesial organization and action.[2] But existence before God in the world is not simply an utterly spontaneous, pre-reflective matter. Human existence in the world, even in the mode of faith, is always a linguistic and interpretive existence. Uninterpreted responses are unassessing responses, and they turn the responder over to victimizing causalities which exploit mere passivity and spontaneity. The refusal to assess a past heritage absolutizes that heritage as something unhistorical and beyond corruption. The failure to interpret critically situations in the present makes the believer passively subject to them as if they were norms, untouchable powers. This is the primary reason why existence in the world before God requires a wisdom (theology) which is not merely spontaneous but is a self-conscious interpretative response. The complexity, power, and corruptibility of reality itself sets this requirement.[3]

Reality does not mold itself to the wishfulness of human desire or the interiority of felt emotions. It places demands on human response and interpretation. Its complexity does not disappear in the face of human simplification. Its power to corrupt does not suspend itself before human innocence or indifference. Reality means the way things are as they are able to affect other things. The intent of the doctrines of faith is to describe realities. Great social systems and epochs of those systems are reality. The enduring relation between a man and woman in marriage is reality. If faith is an existence in the world, it cannot avoid being a

[2]A description of how the ecclesial community is the environment and mediator of reality in the forming and nurturing of faith can be found in Part II of the author's *Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

[3]The persisting corruptibility of reality especially as it creates structures of oppression is the central theme of Paulo Freire's influential writings on education. It is precisely because reality is complex and corrupt that education must always be a "problematizing" which would develop a critical consciousness. Furthermore, Freire will not settle simply for education in its generalized sense of influence and action, but explicitly calls for disciplined reflection and contemplation. Without action, education is mere verbalism. Without reflection, it is mere activism. See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 75–76.

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response to and interpretation of reality, as inherited tradition and as present challenge. And these responses and interpretations are those of the believer himself or herself whose wisdom is not simply another's wisdom, even if it occurs in connection with the wisdom of others in the community of faith. Few would disagree with this. But because this wisdom has to do with reality, it cannot avoid the rigors and disciplines which reality evokes. This is why there is a telos, an impetus in faith itself to approriate whatever is available to it to assist its responses, its interpretations, and its insights. This is the deeper reason why the Christian faith's repudiation of obscurantism and its positive relation to ordered learning is not a mere accident of historical influence. Something about faith itself, the faith of the believer, creates an orientation to reality and, therefore, to ordered learning, a summary word for disciplined efforts to equip the believer to interpret reality.[4]

So far we have argued that faith involves a kind of wisdom and that wisdom itself as reality-related involves ordered learning. We have said little about what "ordered learning" is. Generally speaking, it refers to the institutions or processes of culture which communicate to its members the products and methods of interpreting that culture's version of reality in its various dimensions. Hence, there is an ordered learning in ancient and modern Judaism, in ancient Greece, in the Middle Ages in Europe, and in the public education movements of modern times. However, since the Enlightenment, ordered learning has a more specific connotation. The Enlightenment represents a massive shift in the history of ordered learning which the church ignores at its peril. This shift is not simply from pre-modern to modern cosmologies or from an age of politically established religious faiths to an age of secularity and religious toleration. Enlightenment means a shift in the ways of knowing, inquiring, and relating cognitively to the world. According to this new cognitive posture, everything which presents itself for being understood and for inquiry is part of a larger system or process of relations and events. And cognition and understanding are responsible to go as far as evidence permits in grasping things in their relations, backgrounds, and historical and natural causalties. All contemporary sciences take this posture for granted. The posture combines both the principle of appropriate evidence and the principle of historical-natural relationality (relativity). From the viewpoint of this posture, nothing which presents itself for understanding is immune from the demand for evidence and from relationality to other things. Affected by this posture is not just scientific method in general but historical method as it would reconstruct the past, deal with ancient texts, and interpret past authorships. And all the refinements of method which have occurred since the Enlightenment presuppose this posture, including contemporary hermeneutics, social scientific analyses, and phenomenology.

[4]Education as the experience of such disciplined efforts accords with A.N. Whitehead's definition of education as the "acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge." *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press, 1929), p. 4.

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The Christian church has responded and adjusted to this cognitive posture of the Enlightenment piecemeal and with continuing ambivalence. This ambivalence is manifest in the continuing conflicts between "evangelical" and conservative groups (both Catholic and Protestant) and liberal and revisionist groups. In most schools for clergy education in mainline denominations, the methods of criticism reflecting the cognitive posture of the Enlightenment are taken for granted. Hence, several generations of clergy have been educated in methods of interpreting Scripture, church confessions, doctrines, and moral issues which acknowledge the historical character and relativity of these things. Because this is the case, "ordered learning" has now the specific connotation of the Enlightenment cognitive posture. Ordered learning in our day is not simply identical with Greek *paideia* or the catechesis of earlier Christian times. The ordered learning of clergy education takes for granted the principles of evidence and relationality throughout all the so-called theological disciplines.

This development adds a new dimension to faith's wisdom and the need of wisdom for ordered learning. The critical posture of the Enlightenment is available to the believer as something which assists the interpreting response to reality. This includes the believer's interpretation of the tradition or Christian heritage, the appraisal of its truth, and the relating of such to situations. The logic which presses faith toward wisdom and ordered learning impels that learning toward the cognitive posture of the Enlightenment. For that is what our epoch has made available to the believer in the ongoing struggle with reality.

II
EDUCATED CLERGY, UNEDUCATED BELIEVERS

We are exploring the mystery of educated clergy and uneducated believers as a structure in the life of the church. The one side of the anomaly is the presence of ordered learning throughout the church's history and the "logic" which propels faith toward reality and thus to ordered learning. The other side of the anomaly is the church's failure to take seriously the education (ordered learning) of the believer. Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning—to historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structure of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages, Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at a literalist, elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, and calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it

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possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday school for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in Bible at a university or seminary.[5]

A defensive reaction to these questions will point to the religious and Christian education movements with their sophisticated literatures, the profession of specially trained Christian educators, the thousands of devoted teachers throughout the church's Sunday schools, the carefully designed denominational curricula arriving month after month and year after year as attestations of the church's seriousness about the education of the believer. Such evidences only deepen our mystery. In the light of all *that,* how can it be that the majority of Christian believers remain theologically uneducated? This gulf between theological education as ordered learning and "education" in the church is not a surface or trival phenomenon, but part of the deep structures of the church's self-understanding. It involves, therefore, fundamental assumptions about faith, theology, learning, and education. The question as to why this gulf persists is a historical question, but its answer does not lie simply in a "history of church education." Instead, we must pursue history in the sense of certain formative presuppositions which effected and now maintain this gulf between theologically educated clergy and non-theologically educated laity.

At the deepest level of all is the ambivalence the Christian movement has always had about the importance of learning, knowledge, and the sciences. These things have been in the church in some way almost from the beginning. At the same time, medieval Christendom's treatment of Galileo and Bruno, the debates over geology and evolution, and the two century-long hesitancy to embrace post-Enlightenment historical methods all testify to the fact that the church, as someone has said, had to be brought kicking and screaming into the modern world. Continued debates over evolution and creationism remind us that the kicking and screaming have not ceased but may even be escalating. This ambivalence suggests that deceit, the violation of intellectual honesty, the resistance to reality, and the fear of truth are all very much with us and always will be. They manifest the dialectic of corruption and redemption which will always characterize the church militant.[6]

A second stratum which accounts for the absence of ordered learning in church education is the social structure of earlier Western societies

[5]A number of students of the twentieth century church education movement speak of its failure. Thus, "Christian educators began to suspect that American Protestants as a whole were biblically illiterate and ethically uncommitted. If, indeed, some sixty million hours were devoted every Sunday to Christian education in the churches, much of the energy seemed to have been wasted." Wayne R. Rood, *Understanding Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 77.

[6]Something like this dialectic of corruption and redemption seems indicated in John Gordon Chamberlin's explanation of the "denigration" and "marginality" of the education enterprise in the church. One of the powers at work in this is simply the "subordination of the intelligible content of the Christian faith." *Faith and Freedom: New Approaches to Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 16.

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which restricts learning to the elite classes. Here, learning is posited as a single entity to either be pursued or not pursued. In Charles Dickens' world, ordered learning determined whether one was a "gentleman" or "gentlewoman." In a social world where classes are relatively fixed, learning is for the few—royalty, aristocracy, clergy, physicians, lawyers. This correlation between learning and elite classes would reinforce the gulf between educated clergy and uneducated believer. It does not, however, account for the persistence of that gulf. The reason is that we live in a time which has embraced the democratization of learning. We now assume that public education communicates rudiments of history, mathematics, literature, natural sciences. With certain exceptions, church education is offered to a population educated in these rudiments. However, the churches still offer an "education" which fails to be ordered learning. Hence, it perpetuates the older assumption that ordered learning *with respect to matters of religion,* its texts, history, beliefs, and practices, is not a possibility for the believer. We must now probe beneath these two general strata of our past historical ethos to uncover the specific formative presuppositions which have created this gulf.

What follows is an unavoidably selective attempt to uncover these formative presuppositions. Three themes illumine the mystery of this gulf: the professionalization of "theology," the homiletic paradigm of the way faith occurs, and the generalizing of the meaning of education. All three of these presuppositions were also historical movements which found embodiment in institutions which assure their social persistence: namely, institutions of the seminary or theological school, the act of preaching performed by educated clergy, and the religious (Christian) education movement.

1. *The Professionalization of Theology.* Formative in the gulf between theological education and church education is the gradual narrowing of the concept of theology and the attendant location of theology in the university.[7] For over a thousand years (until the eighteenth century), the word theology referred to a wisdom or sapiential knowledge of God. This does not mean there was utter agreement on the basis and nature of this knowledge. There were mystical versions (Pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure), scholastic versions (Thomas Aquinas) where this knowledge had the character of demonstrated conclusions, biblicist versions where the knowledge was a knowledge of God mediated through God's written word. All agreed, however, that theology was a kind of knowledge, a *habitus* or disposition of the believer. Viewed this way *theologia* was a part of Christian existence as such. Even the distinction between lower and higher levels of this knowledge was a distinction offered to the believer qua believer. It was not a

[7]See Chapter 2 of my *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) for a fuller account of the narrowing career of "theology."

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distinction between priests and laity, scholars and non-scholars. The story of how theology came to mean something else is a long and complex one. This story includes the rise of universities in Europe and the move of theology into the university as a university science. It includes a shift in Protestant schools in the seventeenth century in which theology named not a disposition or wisdom but the referent and content of that disposition, and thus became a term for doctrines, beliefs, or systems of beliefs. Once theology is located in the schools which educate clergy, it becomes an umbrella term for the cluster of sciences or disciplines which organize that education. In a final narrowing, theology moves from a general term for "clergy sciences" because it is identified with one of them, namely systematic or doctrinal theology. Once this narrowing takes place, theology is expelled even from the clergy, the ordained leaders, and is restricted to teacher-scholars who preside over clergy education or over one of its fields. The result of this long process of narrowing is that clergy education and theology become correlative. The school of clergy education is the primary location of theology, and fields (or one of them) pursued in that school define what theology itself is, a scholarly discipline.

One can see immediately how this shapes the church's posture toward the education of the believer. Whatever education in the church is, it cannot be theological education since that is what clergy study in schools designed for their training. Church education, if it exists at all, must therefore discover some other meaning of education than education which is theological. Since the theological school as a post-college seminary is an enterprise of ordered learning appropriating (at least in its ideal sense) the best resources of learning which are available, education in the church as non-theological education must formulate itself in some other way than ordered learning. Further, because education in the church must differentiate itself from theological education, and therefore from theology, it is unable to appropriate the original meaning of theology as wisdom, discipline, and interpretation of tradition, truth, and situation. It is thus unable to appropriate the ordered learning which theology as wisdom requires. Church education must carve out some niche for itself separated from wisdom and the need for ordered learning.

2. *The Homiletic Paradigm of How Faith Occurs.* The church has never questioned the importance of the "formation" of the believer. What the gulf between theological education and church education presupposes is that ordered learning is not important for that formation. Ordered learning, then, is needed by the ordained leadership in its special role and not by believers as they exist in the world before God. This presupposes either that faith has nothing to do with wisdom and the knowledge of the tradition in its truth for the situation, or there is such a wisdom important to faith but it does not require ordered learning. Earlier I argued that faith as existence in the world before God does

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entail theology or wisdom. More characteristic of the church's position is the second alternative. There is a wisdom proper to faith, but it does not require education in the sense of ordered learning. In addition to the narrowed understanding of theology, a second pervasive presupposition operates to support such a view, namely the homiletic paradigm of the way faith is formed.

According to this paradigm, faith is primarily formed and nurtured in the weekly liturgical event of churchly life. According to the Protestant version, this event centers on proclamation and the sermon. Therefore, the sermonic liturgical event is the primary resource for the believers' knowledge of tradition and interpretation of situations. Central to this homiletic paradigm is the Protestant Scripture principle. The imagery, symbols, history, events, and normative figure of tradition are located in and mediated by the texts of Scripture. Proclamation, then, is an act which discovers some route from text to sermon, and the corporate event of this preaching is the decisive and sufficient way the faith of the believer is formed.

Homiletic, valid and important as a moment in the church's worship, is inadequate as a comprehensive paradigm of the way the believer's existence in the world before God is effected and disciplined. In its claim to be sufficient, the homiletic paradigm subverts the very structure of the reflective wisdom of the believer. It does this by reducing the relation of the believer to the tradition or heritage of faith to a relation to texts and by its assumption that exposition of the authoritative text settles the question of truth. Further, its method of "application" of text to life vastly simplifies and even replaces the complex tasks of interpreting and reflecting on situations. In other words, the homiletic paradigm telescopes and reduces the situation of the believer and violates the nature of faith's wisdom by repressing its elements, requirements, and tasks. The reason this paradigm buttresses the gulf between theological education and church education is that it requires ordered learning for the proclaimer, the one who struggles with the texts, doctrines, and the problems of interpretation and application, and withholds ordered learning from the process of faith itself. The believer's wisdom, if it is granted at all, is viewed as a passivity shaped by proclaimed and applied texts, and hence does not have the character of a disciplined reflection in constant struggle with tradition, truth, and situation. As a passivity, it is released from the deliberate inquiry and thinking expected of seminary-trained clergy.

At first sight, the homiletic paradigm appears to be a hierarchical version of faith's formation. In fact, it is not. The products of the church's learning and scholarship are not in fact communicated, "passed on" to the laity. Clergy, not laity, are sometime recipients of ongoing theological scholarship. What is it then which *is* passed on in the sermon? Insofar as a traditional version of the authority of Scripture is dominant, with each discrete text viewed as a unit of *a priori* truth or applicability, the text must be mined for whatever *can* be applied or

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made relevant to the hearer. That about a text which does lend itself to application tends to be its moral content, its lesson for life, its consolatory (therapeutic) power. Hence, what is mediated to the believer tends to be the tradition of piety or morality, which, in more recent times, has taken a therapeutic turn. It should be clear why the homiletic paradigm is one of the powers of history which prevent church education from being theological education. Insofar as the transaction between believer and the sermon event is regarded as sufficient to faith's formation, ordered learning for the believer is dispensable.

3. *The Generalizing of the Meaning of Education.* The inadequacy of the homiletic paradigm has not gone unnoticed in the church. The history of education in the church since the nineteenth century describes attempts to correct and supplement that paradigm. At the same time, the corrective movements, religious education and Christian education, have presupposed and also fostered the gulf between theological and church education. Assuming that church education cannot and should not be theological education, and offering severe criticisms of catechetic-instruction education, the literatures and institutions of twentieth century church education so expanded the very meaning and definition of education as to create a fundamental genre equivocation.[8] Desiring to correct both the homiletic paradigm's claim to be sufficient to faith's formation and the catechetical paradigm for how the tradition is taught, these movements began to treat education as a term for the total social formative process in which faith originates and is nurtured.[9]

Few would dispute the valid insight that the homiletic paradigm is an inadequate account of this process. Nor would many dispute the claim that everything the church does in its inner and outer mission has "educating" (influencing, formative, nurturing) effects. However, once "education" comes to mean simply that, two serious consequences occur.

[8]The ambiguity of education in its multiple meanings is described by Chamberlin who lists ten meanings of the term in current usage. See *ibid.*, p. 19. Chamberlin works his way through these meanings in order to avoid the generalizing of education. He thus argues that education names an intentional process which selects what is important enough to be taught and which involves teachers and students.

[9]The reason this is a genre mistake and an equivocation is that it identifies some valid but very general *aims* of education with the educational act or process itself. Further, the aims which are frequently set forth tend to be the desiderata not simply of the educational act in its ordinary sense, but of the total community of faith in all of its activities. Hence, "development of life-styles in persons and groups" (John H. Westerhoff, III, "Toward a Definition of Christian Education," in Westerhoff, ed., *A Colloquy on Christian Education* [Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1972], p. 68), and "shared praxis" and a "way of knowing" (Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980]) are surely what the community of faith hopes to happen as the total effect of its preaching, counseling, action-organization, administration, intersubjective structures, and liturgy. The list of features of the "educating community of faith" offered by Westerhoff are clearly general features of the ecclesial community itself in its essence and desired telos, not features of ordered learning. See *Values for Tomorrow's Children* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1973), pp. 63–64. To argue that all these things have formative (educational) effects is no doubt correct. To *define* education as that totality is to obscure the church's low commitment to ordered learning for non-clergy.

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First, education as ordered learning is no longer under consideration as *the* meaning of education. More specifically, education in its usual and ordinary sense is suspended. This is what this essay has been calling ordered learning, and it refers to self-conscious attempts, usually in a corporate setting, to transmit by means of a sequential process of disciplined didactic activity both the insights and deposits of the past and the methods and modes of thought and work which enable new insights. The elements of education in this ordinary sense are teachers, students, sequential cumulative learning, appropriate discipline.[10] Once education comes to mean a community's total formative process, virtually its sociology of knowledge, this ordinary meaning disappears and a different *genre* and phenomenon altogether is under consideration.

The second consequence of this change of genre is a new positive agenda for the literature, "discipline," and guild of Christian educators. Once education's genre meaning is generalized, ordered learning is identified as one of many "approaches" to or interpretations of education.[11] As an "approach," it exists in the debates of a guild and a literature, and becomes a literary phenomenon. The absence of ordered learning in church education is hardly noticed since "education" now means something else. The new positive agenda which this creates is a "search for Christian education" in the sense of a total formative socializing, existentializing process. This search explores Christian education (total formative ecclesial process) as a possible academic discipline, its relation to "theology," the educative (formative) effects of liturgy, social action, and Sunday school, and the stages of human development in relation to formative process. It should not be necessary to say that these explorations are not only legitimate but crucial. Perhaps the great contribution of the twentieth century church education movement is just this focus on the elements of ecclesial process. However, when education itself is generalized to mean formative process, the long-held assumption that ordered learning is not for the believer is perpetuated.

[10]It would be difficult to improve on Whitehead's description of the specificity, rigor, and challenge of education (ordered learning). "All practical teachers know that education is a patient process of the mastery of details, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. There is no royal road to learning through an airy path of brilliant generalisations." *The Aims of Education,* p. 6.

[11]A number of typologies of approaches to Christian education have been offered. A recent example is the book edited by Jack Seymour and Donald E. Miller, *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982) where five basic approaches are described. See especially Seymour's introduction. These studies are very helpful maps of current literature. There is, however, some vagueness as to exactly what the approaches have in common, that to which they are approaches. It would not help to say it is "Christian education" since that means either a historical movement containing the variety or a term whose meaning and referent is itself not a matter of consensus. More than likely, the approaches are to the "discipline" or field of Christian education as a literary, pedagogical undertaking. Insofar as typology assigns ordered learning to an "approach," the genre confusion and the generalizing of the meaning of education tends to be obscured. One can then debate the issues on the basis of approaches to a discipline without confronting the legitimacy of expanding education to stand for general formative influence.

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There are, of course, elements in the church's institutional life which seem to have to do with ordered learning. Modern churches are unambiguously committed to buildings, educational spaces, advanced degrees, teachers, directors, and curricula. Because of these elements, the churches offer what appears on the surface to be a genuine educational undertaking. However, it is, curiously, an undertaking minus the essential elements of ordered learning: subject matters with their attending methods and modes of thought, cumulative, sequential stages of learning, rigorous disciplines. Because of the absence of these things, the elements which offer an apparent education (buildings, teachers, curricula, etc.) all take on a distinctive character. Since ordered learning does not determine the agenda of the undertaking, the field of Christian education becomes defined by the twin tasks of program administration and development psychology. Curriculum becomes a literature which is simply an event in the present and does not, like the curricula of ordered learning, start at one place in order finally to get to another place. "Teacher" does not name someone with special training or knowledge in a subject matter, but a volunteer willing to broker the present-oriented curriculum. The content of teaching is not a subject matter with its requirements, but whatever is identified by the curricula or teacher as having general formative relevance. Since education does not mean ordered learning, there are no measures of the success or failure of ordered learning in the church. And this renders invisible the monumental educational failure of church at the level of its laity and congregations.[12]

In conclusion, if the church ever does repudiate and move beyond its inherited axiom that church education cannot be theological education, comprehensive reconstruction will be involved. Cumulative, rigorous educational process and post-Enlightenment tools of analysis and interpretation (historical, literary, social, psychological, philosophical) will have to be introduced into church education. A new population of a very different kind of church teacher will be called for. Directors of Religious Education will have to be more than administrators of educational programs. The educator on the church staff will have to be a theologian-teacher. Anticipating that time, the church needs to assess the axiom which its educational enterprise takes for granted, the axiom that church education cannot be theological education.

[12]These apparent institutional elements all come together in the Protestant Sunday school. The fact that the Sunday school movement originated in an attempt to imitate the public school and that it does have these visible elements of educational space, teachers, and curricula should not mislead us into thinking that the Sunday school is an institutionalization of ordered learning. Insofar as these outward elements mask the absence of cumulative, sequential, rigorous learning, the Sunday school is only a pseudo-school. Hence, one can only sympathize with John Westerhoff's thesis that church education should not be identified with the Sunday school. However, Westerhoff identifies the failure as being because the Sunday school is a *school*. I would identify the failure as due to the fact that it is not. Westerhoff thinks of his call away from schooling and classroom instruction as a radical new way of thinking about education. That call, in my view, simply perpetuates the First Commandment of Protestant church education: "Thou shalt not engage in ordered learning." See Chapter VI, "Down with School!", in *Values for Tomorrow's Children*, especially p. 56.

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